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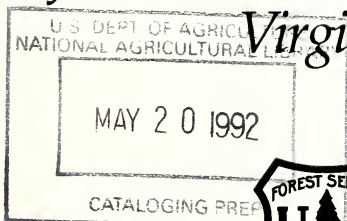
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Mount Rogers Scenic Byway

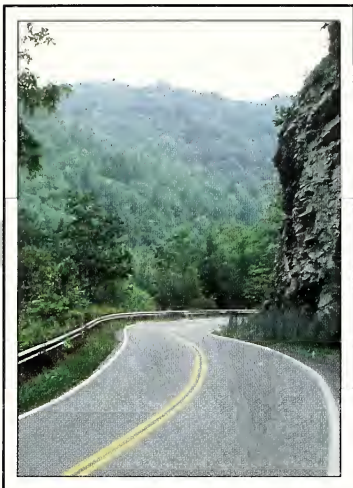


Jefferson National Forest *Virginia*



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United States Department of Agriculture
Forest Service Southern Region



Mount Rogers Scenic Byway

Enjoy a variety of scenic curves and interesting changes in the terrain as you follow either of the two sections of this byway.

The first section begins at

Troutdale, VA. You will drive west for 13.2 miles over Virginia Route 603 to Konnarock, VA. This section of the byway is largely in Smyth County, Virginia. You will traverse the heart of the Mount Rogers National Recreation Area (NRA). Highway 603 is a two-lane paved road and the heart of the scenic, open, rural countryside characteristic of the NRA.

The second section of the byway leads you 32.5 miles east from Damascus, VA, to Volney, VA. The byway follows U.S. Route 58, which serves rural sections of both Washington and Grayson Counties in Virginia, and adjacent parts of Tennessee and North Carolina. U.S. 58 is the major access road to Grayson Highlands State Park. This route offers the easiest access to the "High Country" of the NRA. Other access points to the "High Country" are also located along Route 603, in the first section of the byway.

U.S. 58 is a two-lane, paved scenic road which, for much of its distance, laces back and forth across white water streams through or next to the NRA. Because of its curves and winding character, U.S. 58 is not suitable for vehicles longer than 35 feet.

Troutdale to Konnarock

This section of the byway covers 13.2 miles. Keep track of your mileage to correspond to the locations of the highlights described below.

Begin at Troutdale, VA, at the intersection of Virginia Highways 16 and 603. Troutdale is now a quiet

village, compared to the bustling logging town it was at the turn of the century. It boasts of being the highest (in elevation) incorporated city east of the Mississippi River. Although its population is now less than 200, during its heyday the thriving community had a railroad and a population of 3,000. The home of publisher/author Sherwood Anderson is an historical monument there.

Drive west for 1.9 miles to Fox Creek Falls. Waterfalls create conditions that favor an interesting variety of plant and aquatic life common only to such areas. Fox Creek cascades over several small falls, and offers excellent trout fishing.

Another 0.2 mile farther is the Fox Creek Riparian Area Recovery Project. Fences have been installed to exclude livestock from stream banks. Vegetation will now be able to get reestablished and prevent erosion. More plants along stream banks will also provide shade that lowers the stream temperature, thus benefiting trout.

In another 0.1 mile you will enter the east end of Fairwood Valley. This scenic country features open pastures, apple trees and other fruit for the pickin'. Horses and cattle graze in peaceful scenes, and an abundance of wildflowers bloom all year long. Many miles of hiking and horseback riding trails cross this area, offering spectacular scenery. A number of plans are being drafted to develop recreation and resort facilities in the valley.

Drive 0.6 mile to the Fairwood horse livery. Horse rentals are available in season for rides into the spectacular "High Country" or Pine Mountain (5,000 feet or more). The livery and a small residence remain from a large logging community that housed officials and employees of the U.S. Spruce Lumber Co. when it was in full operation before 1900.

Drive 1.1 miles to Fairwood Horse Camp. This site is popular with riders who trailer their own animals into the area to camp and ride the hundreds of miles of the NRA's notable horse trails.

In another 0.2 mile you will cross one of the many Appalachian National Hiking Trail trailheads. Here, hikers can leave vehicles, arrange for pickup or drop-off.

If you're hungry by this time (and have packed a lunch), you're only 0.3 mile from Fox Creek picnic site. Relax and eat under the shade of a young stand of white pine trees at this popular stopover.

At this point, you're only 0.1 mile from the west end of the Fairwood Valley. The site was purchased

by the Forest Service for recreation uses and has been maintained as a "Landscapes for the Future."

In another 0.5 mile is one of the many NRA sites in which grazing permits are issued to cattle owners who are interested in pasturing their livestock here. While fattening on the ample vegetation, the cattle maintain a pleasing landscape variety and a peaceful rural atmosphere. Rustic fences, wildflowers, berries and apple trees dot the landscape. A trailhead for the Lewis Fork Wilderness and connector trails to Mount Rogers are located here.

Drive 1.1 miles to Grindstone Campground. This is one of the more popular camping areas in the NRA. It features 90 family sites, modern toilet facilities with warm-water showers, and a 400-seat outdoor amphitheatre. You can also hike the Whispering Waters Nature Trail, and other trails that connect to Mount Rogers and the Appalachian Trail. You are now almost at the halfway point in this section of the byway.

In another 2.3 miles, the rural charm of the land is highlighted by the Bethel Baptist Church. Reinforcing this setting is the Log Church, just 0.6 mile farther, on the right.

You can see Mount Rogers in the distance, to the left. At 5,729 feet, Mount Rogers is the highest point in Virginia and the focal point of the Mount Rogers NRA. The mountain stands out because of its prominent spruce/fir cap. The mountain top is accessible only by foot and is not a place from which to see things, but rather is a destination in itself.

Drive 1.5 miles to the intersection of Highways 603 and 600. Here you will find the small, growing community of Konnarock, with two stores and service stations. This is the site of the Lutheran Girls School, which was built by the Hassinger Lumber Company during the late 1800's. It served as a boarding school for girls of fathers involved in the logging boom taking place at the time. The school operated until the 1960's. It is completely sided with chestnut bark.

Continuing on Route 603, go 1.8 miles to Konnarock, VA. Like Troutdale, this village is but a shadow of its former self. Konnarock was the site of a large lumber mill and many residences, including a large Lutheran boys school comparable to the one for girls some 1-3/4 miles to the east. The community has dwindled from a community of several thousand in 1900 to less than 100 now, but seems to be holding its own and growing slightly. The Lutheran Church, made entirely of stone, is a scenic attraction.

In another 0.9 mile is the junction U.S. 58 and Virginia 603. This is the end of the 13.2-mile section of Virginia 603. Points of interest continue on U.S. 58 west to Damascus or east to Volney.

Damascus to Volney

This section of the byway covers 32.5 miles. Keep track of your mileage to match the locations of the sites described below.

Begin at the junction of U.S. 58 and Virginia 91, on the east end of Damascus. This small, but progressive community is a popular stopover and supply depot for Appalachian Trail hikers. It serves as an important doorway into the west end of the NRA over scenic U.S. 58.

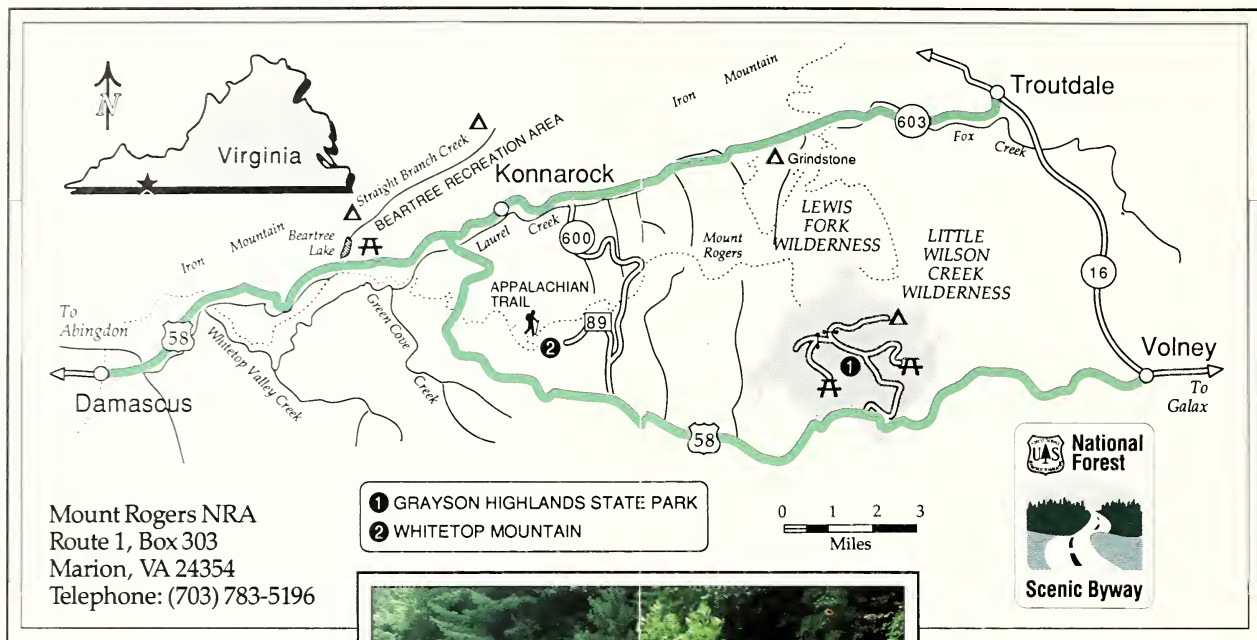
The first site on this part of the byway is the Virginia Creeper National Recreation Trail. This trail occupies the old Virginia Creeper railroad bed from Abingdon, VA, to the Virginia/North Carolina State line. It is a multi-purpose trail for hiking, biking, cross-country skiing and horseback riding. It is noted for its spectacular railroad trestles that cross the many gorges and rivers on its trek to North Carolina.

Drive 0.9 mile to view one of the 32 rustic railroad trestles (steel, arched bridge) on the NRA portion of the Virginia Creeper Trail. Another portion of this trail, covering 16 miles, is administered by the towns of Damascus and Abingdon.

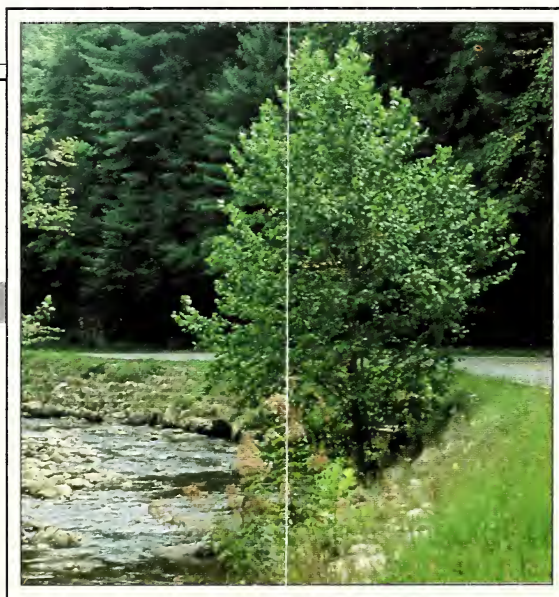
Drive east for 2.2 miles to the Virginia Creeper Trailhead at Straight Branch.

In another 3.7 miles you will reach Beartree Campground. Here, you can enjoy one of the newer recreation facilities in the NRA. A wide variety of recreation opportunities are available. The complex features a large fishing and swimming lake and bathhouse next to a sand beach, a





Mount Rogers NRA
Route 1, Box 303
Marion, VA 24354
Telephone: (703) 783-5196



picnic shelter for large groups, and picnic facilities for families. Beartree has group campground facilities and two family camping loops. Modern rest rooms feature warm-water showers.

Just 0.2 mile farther is Whitetop Laurel Gorge. A wildlife watching area is accessible by trail. If you like to hunt with camera or binoculars you may see a number of species of wildlife common in southwest Virginia.

Drive 9.5 miles, where you will pass the southwest slopes of Whitetop Mountain. You are now at about the midpoint of this section of the byway. The area seems to be ideal for the production of Christmas trees. Almost every piece of private land is planted with them.

Whitetop Mountain is the second highest peak in Virginia, at 5,570 feet. The mountain got its name from the many days during fall, winter and spring when its top is covered with snow or frost. It boasts

the highest automobile road in the state.

The mountain offers a unique opportunity to interpret geology because some of the oldest exposed rocks on earth are there. Take in the view from the top of the mountain. Without having to move from one spot, you can look to the north and view the geology created by sediment laid down in ancient seas and, by turning around 180 degrees, you can see a landscape created by volcanos.

Drive east 0.9 mile to the intersection with Highway 600. This road goes north to Whitetop Mountain and Elk Garden Gap. The road leads to a parking lot where you can leave your car and take the shortest hike to the top of Mount Rogers. The trail will lead you 4.5 miles to the top of the mountain. Here you find access to natural balds, spectacular scenery, unique forest types and miles of outstanding riding and hiking trails.

Return to Route 58 and drive east for 1.5 miles, where you will cross Helton Creek. This is a pretty mountain stream where you can fish for native trout.

In another 2.4 miles you will pass the Mount Rogers School. Typical of schools earlier in the century, it is one of the few remaining schools that teaches kindergarden through 12th grade in one building. It has the smallest high school enrollment in the State.

Drive 3.6 miles farther to Grayson Highlands State Park. Here, you have good year-round access to the "High Country" of the Mount Rogers National Recreation Area. The park offers seasonal cultural events that are regionally popular. Contact the park superintendent for further information; telephone (703) 579-7092.

Go 7.6 miles to Volney, VA. This cross-roads community marks the end of this section of the byway.



Area Ranger
Mount Rogers National Recreation Area
Jefferson National Forest
USDA Forest Service – Southern Region
Route 1, Box 303
Marion, VA 24354
Telephone (703) 783-5196

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